

Nipomo CSD still wants state water

By Angela Hastings
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NIPOMO — The Nipomo Community Service District directors must make a difficult choice: honor a public vote, or access enough water for district residents.

The residents, spilling on to the aisles and out the door of the small auditorium at the CSD meeting Wednesday night, almost overwhelmingly urged the board to take the water.

The directors have been considering the move since the public defeated a measure to access state water by 24 votes on Nov. 5. Both directors and members of the public have said they believe the vote was tainted by the Citizens Planning Alliance of San Luis Obispo, which distributed flyers criticizing state water shortly before the vote.

The reasons for overturning the vote and accessing the 2,500 acre-feet per year of state water to which Nipomo is entitled are many, according to the directors and CSD Manager Ryder Ray.

The well water that the CSD uses is rapidly decreasing, and the private owners of the well sites have the legal right to prevent the CSD from using them, CSD President David Manriquez said. In addition, the production and transport of desalinated water would cost \$1,200 to \$1,600 per acre/foot compared to \$530 per acre/foot for state water and treatment, Ray said.

When a few residents said they had heard state water was unreliable and that costs would be constantly raised, Ray responded: "Call Napa, (the city which most recently accepted state water), but be prepared to hear the state hit it right on the nose."

A small percentage of the crowd of about 90 people argued that, regardless whether state water was the best water source, a decision to override a vote, would be unethical and undemocratic.

"Shame on the board and any part of the public who wants to resend a public vote," said resident Jack Swords, receiving an occasional applause and "amen" from the public. "The integrity of this board is based on this decision."

But by far a larger applause followed the many impassioned speeches of those who favored state water.